

# Pre-flight checks

We all do pre-flight checks ... don't we? All aircraft, from microlights to A380s, use checklists to cross-check that everything that should have been done has been done. Paragliders and hang gliders are aircraft! However many BHPA pilots don't bother with a pre-flight checklist at all.

Checklist? That last-minute run-through of the essentials, to improve our chances of a safe transition from ground to air. If you learned to fly at a BHPA school you will have been taught a sequence of items to check prior to take-off, using a mnemonic to assist the memory.

Mne-what? A silly little phrase, relatively easy to remember, from which you take the first letter of each word to remind you of a more relevant word starting with the same letter. The BHPA mnemonic is 'Will Geordie Have His Cat Aboard (Today)?' Silly? Yes. Memorable? With practice. Helpful? Oh yes!

Take-offs with one or more of these items missing are never pretty: taking off without fastening your helmet or closing harness buckles; launching straight into the path of another glider; untangling brake lines in the air; the full 'turned the wrong way' unspinning needed just after take-off; or an experienced pilot watching his wing take off perfectly and soar for several minutes ... while he stands looking on, ashen-faced and open-mouthed, having forgotten to clip in! Pilots have died falling out minutes after take-off.

And that's the point. Checklists are not designed to waste your time and delay your take-off so you miss that thermal – they are there to save your life! Use it. On every take-off!

And, if you have to stop to fiddle with something – forgetting to switch on your camera for example – or are otherwise are distracted, start again!

## Will Geordie Have His Cat Aboard (Today)?

**W** Wind and weather

**G** Glider

**H** Helmet

**H** Harness

**C** Controls

**A** All clear

**(T)** Turn direction – an extra check for paraglider pilots

